



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

April 2005

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

BOSTON HARBOR DEEP DRAFT NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) has requested that NOAA Fisheries serve as cooperating federal agency for the Boston Harbor Deep Draft Navigation Improvement Project. The proposed project would deepen portions of Boston Harbor Navigation channel depths up to -50 feet mean low water (MLW). Participation as a cooperating agency includes the identification of issues and topics that need consideration within the state/federal joint review process, as well as continued participation in technical working group meetings for the project. In addition, NOAA Fisheries will be providing conservation recommendations through interagency consultation process in order to protect valuable habitat resources in the area.

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NEPTUNE LNG REVIEW

NOAA Fisheries has recently provided comments to the US Coast Guard (USCG) regarding a Deepwater Port Act (DPA) application by Neptune LNG to construct a liquefied natural gas terminal within waters of Massachusetts Bay. NOAA Fisheries advised USCG pursuant to the DPA completeness review that the application was incomplete and should not proceed in the absence of important information regarding impacts on commercial and recreational fishing activities, fishery resources, and fishery habitats. Without this information, NOAA Fisheries is unable to properly evaluate the proposal, impacts on public trust resources, or alternatives which would avoid and/or minimize such adverse effects. The DPA 330-day review period for these facilities will not begin until the application has sufficient information for a proper evaluation. Neptune LNG is the second LNG proposal within Massachusetts Bay and the third within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9131)

MAINE DOT TO REPLACE BRIDGE OVER NARRAGUAGUS RIVER

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) plans to replace the two route 1A bridges over the Narraguagus River in Milbridge. Currently there is a bridge on both ends of the man-made causeway near the mouth of the river. The causeway appears to act as a constriction point, forcing water through two relatively small openings under the bridges. The primary concern of the resource agencies is the effect that constriction may have on upstream and downstream

migration of adult and juvenile Atlantic salmon. The Narraguagus River is one of eight rivers in Maine included as part of the distinct population segment for federally endangered Atlantic salmon. NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) believe the planned bridge replacement may be an opportunity to explore options for increasing the width of the bridges with the intent of improving water flow and passage of Atlantic salmon.

NOAA Fisheries staff from the Habitat Conservation and Protected Resources Divisions met with staff from the MDOT at the route 1A bridge on April 14th. The site visit was to discuss existing site conditions, the current plan for replacing the bridges, the potential for exploring alternative designs, limitations of the project site, and benefits achieved from alternatives which increase the bridge openings. At the end of the meeting, the MDOT staff were willing to consider evaluating alternative designs if data suggests benefits to fish passage can be gained. NOAA Fisheries staff will continue to follow-up as new information becomes available. (Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

DAM REMOVAL PROPOSED AS MITIGATION FOR BREWER SHORELINE STABILIZATION

The City of Brewer, Maine is planning a large scale waterfront redevelopment along the banks of the Penobscot River. The project includes a multi-use recreation trail, improvements to a boat ramp for emergency vessels, and approximately 5,000 linear feet of shoreline stabilization using large rip rap or sheet pile. This project has been in development for several years. At a meeting on April 1, the project proponents put forth a plan which reduced the overall impacts on intertidal and subtidal habitat and eliminated impacts on tidal freshwater marsh habitat. As proposed, the total impacts on intertidal and subtidal habitat are approximately 2.5 acres. The focus of the April 1 meeting was to determine if the impacts had been reduced to the greatest extent practicable and consider options for mitigation.

The resource agencies at the meeting agreed to minor adjustments to the rip rap footprint which further reduced the impacts. Of greater merit, however, was that the applicant proposed the removal of the first dam on the Sedgeunkedunk River, a tributary to the Penobscot River, as mitigation for the wetland impacts. A field study will be conducted to determine the extent of habitat opened by this action. Species expected to benefit most are alewife and blueback herring, although some Atlantic salmon may utilize the habitat. Other smaller projects, including the removal of a derelict vessel were also proposed. The resource agencies, including the USFWS, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, believe this planned mitigation will likely meet the required standards to offset losses associated with unavoidable impacts. (Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

MEADOWLANDS INTERAGENCY MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MIMAC)

This month's meeting was a site visit to the EnCap Golf Holdings, LLC., site on Berrys Creek. The permittee has presented a preliminary proposal to the MIMAC to enhance the wetlands adjacent to their mitigation site. The reason for the proposal is unclear, although a mitigation bank for use by EnCap was mentioned. Other entities may also be seeking to use part of EnCap's property to meet their mitigation needs. The group viewed the site and the progress on the mitigation. Excavation is almost complete and planting is planned for this spring. The MIMAC has several concerns about the proposal including contamination levels and the creation of an attractive nuisance for fish and wildlife. Berrys Creek is highly contaminated and within the study area for a superfund site. These issues were raised as part of the original permit for the EnCap project and never resolved fully prior to permit issuance. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE AUTHORITY TREMLEY POINT CONNECTOR ROAD

HCD staff attended an interagency site visit to view several of the alignments considered by the New Jersey Turnpike for the Tremley Point Connector Road, Rahway River crossing in Linden. According to the project proponents, the road will remove truck traffic, including trucks carrying petroleum products from Citgo and Kinder Morgan facilities from residential areas. The secondary benefit will be the redevelopment of the brownfields on Tremley Point Road. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

DOCKS IN SHELLFISH BEDS

HCD has reviewed two letters of coordination from the New York District ACOE this month for docks in shellfish beds. Both letters addressed dock extensions and boat lifts, but not the pile supported structures that had been built without authorization. The existing structures do not appear consistent with the SPGP-19 for docks in shellfish beds due to their size and the use of treated lumbers, and were authorized under Nationwide Permit #32 for completed enforcement actions. HCD is concerned with the potential impacts on shellfish beds and essential fish habitat from the dock authorization and the avoidance of the stringent requirements of the SPGP-19. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

CROWN LANDING LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) PROJECT

Habitat staff provided comments on the February 2005 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to the lead agency, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, for the Crown Landing Liquefied Natural Gas and Logan Lateral Projects. The Crown Landing proposal would construct and operate a LNG facility on the Delaware River in Logan Township, Gloucester County, NJ and the waters of the state of Delaware; and the construction and operation of a new natural gas pipeline and ancillary facilities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The project would consist of facilities capable of unloading LNG ships, storing up to 450,000 cubic meters of LNG, vaporizing the LNG through a closed-loop system, and sending out natural gas at a baseload rate of 1.2 billion cubic feet per day. Concerns include the conversion of shallow water habitat to deep water habitat by dredging the ships' berth area to -40 below mean low water; the impacts on eggs and larvae of fishes, including prey species of federally managed fishes, due to impingement and entrainment from the ships' ballast water intakes; and the effects of dredging

on aquatic organisms due to resuspension of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in an area reported to contain PCBs in the sediments.. NOAA Fisheries Service recommends that an offshore alternative for the LNG terminal that would avoid impacts on these fisheries resources be more thoroughly investigated. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

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SAINT LAWRENCE CEMENT DENIED CZM A CERTIFICATION

The proposal to operate a new cement manufacturing plant, a 1200 acre mine in the Town of Greenport and develop an extensive deep water industrial marina in the Hudson River at the City of Hudson did not meet with the New York CZM consistency certification. New York found that the project was inconsistent with eight of the enforceable policies in its approved Coastal Management Program. This present development indicates that anadromous and local fish populations are no longer at risk from a variety of adverse aquatic impacts associated with the industrial marina component of this proposal. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE CONTEMPLATES WATERFRONT REHABILITATION

Milford Field Office staff received a draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) and essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment from the National Park Service regarding potential plans to rehabilitate the Sailors Haven marina and ferry dock on Fire Island. Activities considered in the DEA feature maintenance dredging with disposal as backfill or beach placement, bulkhead repair, replacing the ferry dock and light poles, and an expansion in marina capacity. Comments on the DEA and EFH assessment are forthcoming in May. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

GASOLINE SPILL IN HUDSON RIVER

Over seven thousand gallons of gasoline headed for Rensselaer County were spilled near the mouth of Wappinger Creek (Dutchess County, New York) when barge B-35 recently contacted a shoal. Due to strong wind conditions, models suggested that the discharged gasoline evaporated in hours. The accident occurred in one of New York's significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats where a variety of resident and anadromous fishes are expected to be present. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)